

SUPPLEMENTARY ARTICLE ON THE PHENOMENAL AND
RELATIVITY
THEORIES OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE.

There are views prevalent in metaphysical speculation, which are working as much mischief in the present day as the ideal theory did in the time of Berkeley. What we need is a new Thomas Reid, to do in this century what the Scottish philosopher did in the last—to bring back speculation to a modest induction. In the absence of such, we have a remark or two to make in the way of protest.

According to the prevailing metaphysics of this age, the mind perceives as external to itself only PHENOMENA. This is one of the fundamental principles of Kant, and runs through all the philosophies, which have ramified immediately or mediately from that powerful thinker—we cannot add careful observer. Kant goes so far as to maintain that our knowledge even of self or mind is only phenomenal. This phenomenal theory, coupled with the cognate doctrine, that sense is the only source of experiential knowledge (thereby omitting consciousness), and that we are not conscious of self as a distinct object, constitute in our view (this is not the common view) the fundamental errors of the great German metaphysician. In examining this phenomenal theory, it is needful to notice that the word phenomenon has two meanings. In the nomenclature of science, it means a fact to be explained, an individual really known, to be referred to a law or cause unknown. Using the phrase in this sense, we at once admit that the mind does begin with a knowledge of individual phenomena in the concrete, and thence proceeds to analyze the concrete whole into parts (by abstraction), to discover resemblances (generalize), and causes (producing power). We suspect that it is in this sense that many British writers so readily admit the Kantian maxim, that the mind in perception and self-consciousness knows phenomena, and phenomena only. But it is not in this sense that Kant holds the doctrine. According to him, the mind, by the external and internal senses, observes, not real things, but phenomena in the sense of appearances, in regard to which he holds that there is much in them which has no objective reality, and that we cannot tell how much or how little of the remainder is real. Now, this phenomenon seems to us to be a mere modification (and no improvement) of the idea of the older speculators; it is a *tertium quid*, interposing itself officiously between the knowing mind and the thing known. In opposition to this prevailing doctrine, we lay down the maxim, that the mind knows intuitively the thing itself, not all the thing, but the thing in the mode in which it is presented. What we know is phenomenon in the British sense, viz., an individual object or reality. If we are asked to prove this, we answer, that this is a primary cognition, which does not admit of proof by any other cognition clearer, or simpler, or more fundamental. The mind holds the object to be a real object—it may imagine it to be otherwise, but cannot judge or believe it to be otherwise. The mind cannot trust

to itself at all if it cannot trust to itself in this. But the mind will, and must trust itself in this respect, and finds its native belief confirmed by daily experience. No doubt, the metaphysician experiences a difficulty in reconciling certain phenomena with the trustworthiness of our original perceptions. (See Art. II.) But some of these difficulties (as, for example, in regard to the reality of heat) have been removed by science, while those that remain are found in departments of nature not yet thoroughly explored, and cannot set aside a doctrine which (though difficult to unfold precisely) can appeal to our very intuitions.

It seems very clear, that unless the mind begins with realities, with things, in its primary knowledge, it can never reach these by any logical or intellectual process